1. **Please provide a brief overview of the issue at hand, the problem that the proposal addresses, including relevant background information on its nature and scope. Suggested length: up to up to ¾ page.**

Now more than ever before, access to affordable high-speed telecommunications services is essential to fostering economic growth, civic participation, education, healthcare access, job training, public safety and other services. Despite a $300+ million investment in Virginia's infrastructure for broadband services since 1998, too many Virginians still lack access to affordable broadband services. Virginia is plagued by a variety of factors that fuel the affordable service delivery model – challenging topography, low population densities, restrictive ordinances and regulations, and economic instability all combine to create an unfavorable deployment model where private sector companies struggle to build a "business case" for additional investment to close the coverage gaps.

The Virginia broadband initiative was born out of the desire to identify and systematically address the constraints listed above and to meet the connectivity needs of the un/underserved in Virginia and to do so in such as way that would not only create a business case (not direct subsidies) for deployment, but also provide a community business model framework capable of providing long-term network sustainability.

Key dates in the program's evolution include:

September 2006 – Commonwealth Office of Telework Promotion and Broadband Assistance (OTPBA)created by Executive order 35

July 2007 – Office of Telework Promotion and Broadband Assistance Codified through legislation to exist through 2018.

June 2007 –Commonwealth Broadband Roundtable (72 member group comprised of stakeholders spanning industry, academia, government, and R&D) established – charged by Governor Kaine to:
- *Provide localities interested in providing (or facilitating the delivery of) broadband access to constituents with a resource to accelerate implementation*
- *Remain focused on three principles – long-term sustainability, public-private partnerships, and community driven strategy.*

September 2008 – Commonwealth Broadband Roundtable Releases final report and launches online "community toolkit" to provide a "roadmap" to guide communities along a decision path beginning with "what are we trying to do," deciding "how" to do it, and finally establishing a plan for "how do we pay for it" (www.wired.virginia.gov)

May 2009 – Commonwealth launches VA's first broadband availability map (well in advance of the announcement of the NTIA national mapping initiative). It was the first map (in the nation) based on address level data provided through voluntary cooperation of service providers and industry associations. Notably, the map was developed at no incremental cost to citizens (used existing resources).

June 2009 – Broadband Advisory Council created by legislation to continue work of the Commonwealth's broadband roundtable and to guide broadband strategy/activities

February 2009 – present – Commonwealth representatives participate in federal broadband initiatives, filing comments, participating in FCC staff workshops, providing application guidance, letters of support, and project rankings to NTIA and RUS.

2. **An explanation of the proposed/effective solutions and how it would, or has, changed current practice. Detail the way the problem was, or is, proposed to be addressed. If applicable, cite examples of similar approaches in place elsewhere around the United States. Suggested length: ¾ page.**

Prior to the creation of the OTPBA, there were a number of disparate state agency initiatives to support broadband in the Commonwealth, none of which ever rose to a level of significance sufficient enough to have widespread impact. Placing the OTPBA in the Executive Branch brought immediate visibility and credibility to broadband as an issue, created a single "go to" location in state government for broadband information, resources, mentoring, etc., and created a foundation for greater collaboration and widespread impact.

The existence of the OTPBA, the broadband toolkit, and the broadband map has provided Virginia communities with the resources necessary to confidently pursue public-private partnerships for broadband deployment. In one community (Franklin County), the IT manager followed the toolkit and successfully reduced (by leveraging existing assets, grants, and telecommunication spend) the cost of a wireless deployment to cover 70% of the county from $500k out of pocket to $83k out of pocket. Franklin county was the first area to complete and execute using the toolkit methodology, however a number of other communities are in the process of formulating initiatives and have applied for stimulus funding (round 1 and round 2) to help with build-out.

Additionally, having a committed resource (OTPBA) in the executive branch to keep "watch" on broadband policy issues and opportunities at the state and federal level provides small telecommunication providers and communities (who don't have the staff to dedicate to such activities) with a means of receiving a "heads-up" on items of interest, funding sources, workshops, etc. The office also supports (mentoring, guidance) and serves as a vocal advocate for, broadband initiatives across the Commonwealth as well as providing a vehicle for keeping broadband "on the radar screen" of leaders at the state and federal levels. Virginia has been an active participant in broadband activities at the federal level including: participating in FCC "state best practices" National Broadband Plan workshops, provided comments to NTIA/RUS on "how" the broadband stimulus funding programs should be structured, hosting a round 1 broadband application (statewide) workshop (in cooperation with Senator Mark Warner) featuring Larry Strickling and Jonathan Adelstein

From the Commonwealth's perspective, having the OTPBA has allowed (and will continue to allow) for greater collaboration with the service provider community and has spurred creative thinking about the role that broadband will play in the ultimate success/failure of initiatives such as electronic medical records, telemedicine, workforce development to name a few. Specifically, the OTPBA is collaborating with the VA Office of Health IT to perform consolidated EMR/HER/Medicaid usage surveys (leveraging several sources of funding including Office of the National Coordinator(ONC) and NTIA planning dollars) that will be layered on the existing (and future) broadband maps as a means of determining "where" healthcare providers without access to broadband are located so that the resources necessary for them to reach "meaningful use" as defined by the ONC can be deployed/implemented without duplicative spending. Additionally, the OTPBA collaborated with the Center for Innovative Technology to submit a sustainable broadband deployment application to NTIA for Round 2 funding built on the toolkit's list of e-dependent applications capable of providing "anchor" revenue and network sustainability while at the same time addressing an identified citizen need. The proposed project has 10 partners providing assistance and applications including telemedicine, neo-natal care, online training for those with brain injuries, digital literacy programs for senior citizens, telework opportunities and e-commerce training for small businesses.

With the announcement of the national broadband plan, it is envisaged that the role of the OTPBA will be strengthened and broadened as activities at the federal level bring into play new policies (and potential mandates) that states will have to address. We anticipate that over time, more and more states will build upon the national mapping initiatives and establish formal broadband programs and offices to deal with the ever increasing volume of activity, however, until that happens, Virginia remains one of the few states to have taken such an approach.

3. **What were the start-up costs associated with the program or policy? Or, if the submission is an "idea," describe the projected start-up costs. Suggested length: ¾ page.**

Start-up costs (and ongoing support) for the OTPBA and broadband activities have been negligible (see funding, question 10). The only "cost" associated with establishing the office and launching the initiative was the time investment necessary to work with the Executive branch and the General Assembly to craft the executive order and subsequent legislation and to establish the "dual appointment" relationship with the Center for Innovative Technology.

4. **How is the program or policy funded, or how will it be funded? Suggested length: up to ½ page.**

Virginia has taken a very conservative approach to "how" the OTPBA, toolkit, and mapping initiatives could be funded – requiring, to the highest degree possible that existing resources be re-purposed and re-assigned to accomplish our goals rather than incur additional expenses/FTEs – especially in a time where budgets are shrinking at an alarming rate. As such, there has been no additional funding appropriated from the state budget for the OTPBA and its associated activities. By program, resources leveraged are as follows:

Establishment/staffing of OTPBA *– director is "loaned" (as governed by the code of Virginia) from an agency to the Administration. Currently the director is provided by the Center for Innovative Technology and serves both as the Director and Deputy Secretary of Technology under a dual appointment status.*

Broadband Roundtable/Toolkit Development *– All broadband roundtable members served as volunteers with no cost/travel reimbursement from the Commonwealth. The OTPBA director staffed the initiative with support from the Secretary of Technology's office upon request. Toolkit "content" was developed by roundtable members (no cost) and the initial website provided by Virginia Interactive at no cost.*

Broadband map *– the Commonwealth's initial broadband map was a volunteer effort. OTPBA lead the initiative, working with service providers to negotiate non-disclosure agreements (NDA was provided by Verizon at no cost) and collect data. The Center for Innovative Technology agreed to serve as the data repository so that the group could leverage their FOIA exemption to further protect provider data and the Virginia Geographic Information Network (VGIN) performed the mapping function using existing resources and staff. Funding ($30k) for website upgrades necessary to support the mapping applications (to what is now known as www.wired.virginia.gov) was provided by the Center for Innovative Technology from funds previously used for broadband awareness programs.*

Having such a "lean" model has served us well in so much as that the OTPBA has been able to maintain operations and continue to push the ball forward as larger programs with dedicated staff/resources have been forced to make substantial cuts to programs and services. In early March, Virginia was awarded broadband planning and mapping funds from NTIA to expand our current capabilities (approx $2.3m total). Those funds not be used to build additional capacity/staffing in the OTPBA to carry out the requirements, rather we will once again be using the partnership model to leverage existing state resources/partners and private sector partners so that when the funding ends, we will not be faced with how to "sustain" positions and activities established under the grant.

5. **Describe the positive outcomes generated by the program or policy, or the projected outcomes from the idea submitted. Suggested length: up to ¾ page**.

The biggest "positive" resulting from the Virginia Broadband Initiative is that leaders and private sector broadband providers throughout the Commonwealth now have a dedicated resource available to advocate for and support broadband infrastructure and application deployment in the Commonwealth. The OTPBA has quickly become a trusted partner and "subject matter expert" and is viewed as a sounding board and mentor when problems arise. Having the office to advocate for a holistic approach to broadband deployment (infrastructure and applications) has lead to unprecedented collaboration across cabinet secretariats (state level) as others begin to recognize the key role that the availability of affordable broadband services play in the ultimate success/failure of programs under their purview (EMR/telemedicine/distance learning/public safety).

Virginia has been nationally recognized for our broadband mapping, promotion of public private partnerships, etc. and that visibility has brought attention to many of the build-outs and application deployment initiatives that are happing at the regional and local level. The recognition would never have occurred without the OTPBA in place to maintain focus and drive the initiatives that ultimately attracted attention.

In many aspects, the initial goals set for the office/programs have been realized –the codification of the office, the development of the map, the toolkit, and national recognition for Virginia as a "broadband" friendly state, but we certainly don't believe our job is done – in fact, in many ways it is just beginning as we turn our attention to the federal government to see what impact(s) the national broadband plan will have on the telecommunications regulatory, competitive, and funding environments.

6. **Will/Did the program or policy require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If yes, please cite:**

2009

HB2423/SB1336 – Establishing the Commonwealth Broadband Advisory Council; Patrons: Joe May and Phillip Puckett

Summary:
Broadband Advisory Council. Establishes the Governor's Broadband Advisory Council. The purpose of the Council shall be to advise the Governor on policy and funding priorities to expedite deployment and reduce the cost of broadband access in the Commonwealth. The council shall be staffed by the Office of Telework Promotion and Broadband Assistance. Technical amendments to the bill adjust the membership of the Council.

2008

HB 1017 Telework Promotion and Broadband Assistance, Office of; established, report.
Patron - Timothy D. Hugo

Summary:
Office of Telework Promotion and Broadband Assistance; codified; sunset. Codifies Executive Order 35 (2006) creating the Office of Telework Promotion and Broadband Assistance under the Secretary of Technology. The goals of the Office are to encourage telework as a family-friendly, business-friendly public policy that promotes workplace efficiency and reduces strain on transportation infrastructure. In conjunction with efforts to promote telework, the Office shall work with public and private entities to develop widespread access to broadband services. The provisions of this act expire on July 1, 2018.

2006

EO35 – Creating the Office of Telework Promotion and Broadband Assistance
http://www.wired.virginia.gov/pdf/EO_35.pdf

7. **If applicable, how has the program or policy expanded or changed since its inception?**

The broadband arena is a dynamic space and programs such as those deployed in Virginia must have the ability to adapt and respond to constituent needs. Fortunately, the Virginia initiative has been built on goals and program concepts rather than the deployment of rigid "one size fits all" programs that have limited shelf-life and applicability.   In the short time that the OTPBA has been in existence, the focus of the office has "bounced" back and forth between being (at any one time and sometimes simultaneously):

- A community oriented resource (toolkit)
- An advocate for broadband friendly policies (rights-of-way, tower attachment, etc.)
- A resource for telecommunication providers
- A coalescing point for statewide initiatives (mapping, roundtable, grant applications)
- A grant/support letter writer for federal funding opportunities

To now determining how to make sure our (as state) and our constituents (communities, broadband providers) interests are adequately represented in (current and future) activities at the federal level.

This is a landmark time for broadband in the United States. Broadband is now a mainstream issue at the federal level, and for the first time in history, there are significant resources and funding being deployed specifically for/that depend on the availability of affordable broadband connectivity. We believe that our experience and flexible program construct provides a firm foundation upon which future resources, policies and programs can be built.

What are your future goals?

In all fairness, it is difficult to articulate with any degree of specificity about what Virginia's broadband initiatives will look like in the future since so many of the influencers are currently unclear, but it is safe to say that our overall goal of having sustainable, affordable broadband services available to all Virginians will remain the central focus of the OTPBA, the Governor, and the newly created Broadband Advisory Council. In the pursuit of this goal, the initiative will:

- Maintain Virginia's position as a broadband leader
- Work toward the successful completion of our "Electronic Medical Record/Telemedicine" benchmarking exercise as a model for other states to follow to maximize leverage and avoid duplicative spend
- Provide effective representation of Virginia's interests in conversations regarding the impact of the national broadband plan and pending universal service reform legislation
- Update and expand "toolkit" items (maintain "relevance and usefulness")
- Monitor and pursue federal funding opportunities as appropriate and available.
- Leave time in the schedule to keep an eye toward the future to see what comes next.

Add space to this form, as appropriate.

When complete, return to:
Better Government Competition 2010
Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research
Attention: Shawni Littlehale, Director
85 Devonshire Street, 8th floor
Boston, MA 02109
bgc@pioneerinstitute.org

For further information regarding the Better Government Competition and Pioneer Institute, please visit our website @ www.pioneerinstitute.org.

All questions regarding the competition should be directed to Shawni Littlehale @ 617-723-2277 x 207 or to slittlehale@pioneerinstitute.org.

DEADLINE: All applications must be postmarked or e-mailed by Monday, March 29th @ 4:30 PM EST, to be considered for a 2010 Better Government Competition award.